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Letter dated 22 January 2001 from the Permanent Representative of Jamaica to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

I have the honour to forward herewith the Kingston Consensus, which was endorsed by the Ministers and Representatives of the 35 Governments that participated in the fifth Ministerial Meeting on Children and Social Policy in the Americas, held in Kingston from 9 to 13 October 2000 (see annex).

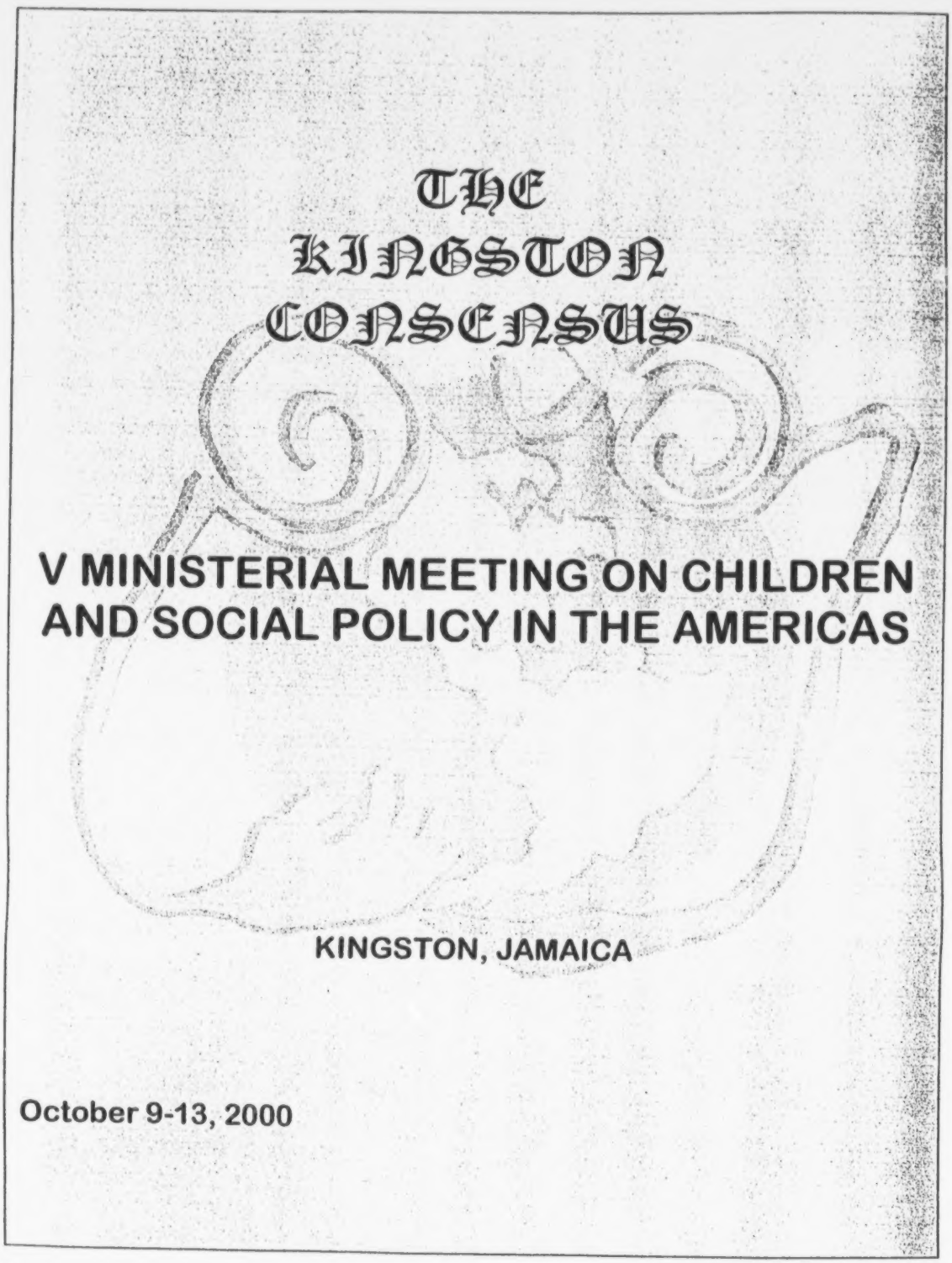
I should be grateful if you would circulate the present letter and its annex as a document of the General Assembly under agenda item 42.

(*Signed*) M. Patricia **Durrant**
Ambassador
Permanent Representative

01-22642 (E) 290101

Annex to the letter dated 22 January 2001 from the Permanent Representative of Jamaica to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

[Original: English and Spanish]



PREAMBLE

The Ministers and Representatives of Governments participating in the Fifth Ministerial Meeting on Children and Social Policy in the Americas held in Kingston, Jamaica on 9-13 October, 2000 present the results of the deliberations and recommendations endorsed by consensus:

CONSIDERING THAT

1. These Ministerial Meetings are an effective mechanism for monitoring and evaluation, including the analysis of obstacles as well as sharing experiences on the progress in the implementation of the World Summit Children goals, as well as for defining policy directives and strategic orientations. As such, they are also important mechanisms for advocacy to keep children and adolescents high on the political and social agenda of the region and of each country. The goal of the Kingston Consensus is to call on States parties to focus on what can be done from the year 2000 to accelerate progress towards the full implementation of World Summit Goals, the Convention on the Rights of the Child and the Lima Accord and the developing of a future agenda.

2. Since 1990, change, planned and unplanned, has proceeded at a fast rate and interpretations of the social processes behind the change are likewise evolving. Social, economic and political conditions affecting children and adolescents and paradigms created to explain them are, at the end of the decade, quite different. The region recognizes the urgent need to resolve key survival issues while it continues the change from a central focus on survival to one oriented towards protection, promotion and the assurance of one's right to participation and integral development.

3. The states of the region have recognized the value of human rights through the ratification of Conventions and the

endorsement of plans of action and recommendations emanating from different global and regional conferences. However, the complete fulfillment of human rights continues to be challenged both within the region and within countries.

4. In certain countries, due to the implementation of particular developmental strategies, programmes of structural adjustment, the process of globalization and unresolved issues regarding inequitable market access, social and cultural variables have been under-emphasized thus deepening inequities and exclusion in favour of economic growth. Consequently, social investment, although increasing, remains insufficient. Similarly, the reduction of Official Development Assistance has negatively impacted on economic and social development in some countries of the region.

5. Children and adolescents are often excluded from participating in economic, political, and social processes, which thereby hinders their own development and deprives society of their insights, commitment, and energy.

6. The situation of children, adolescents and women of the region has improved in remarkable ways since 1990, as indicated by, among others, the following accomplishments:

   A. The Convention on the Rights of the Child and the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women have been ratified by the overwhelming majority of countries of the Americas;

   B. Infant and under five mortality rates have been reduced by over 20% in most countries;

   C. Vaccination rates are over 90% for the major immunizable diseases.

   D. Poliomyelitis has been eradicated and mortality due to measles has been significantly reduced.

E. Net primary school enrolment is over 90%.

F. Sanitation coverage has increased considerably, particularly in rural areas.

G. All countries have made progress in salt iodization and most have improved the fortification of foods with iron and vitamin A.

H. Improvements in protein and caloric intake have resulted in a marked reduction in childhood malnutrition.

I. Some progress was made towards gender equity and equality for women. However, their political and economic participation remain too low.

7. In spite of such progress, all countries in the Americas are concerned with the following issues: (a) the unmet goals of the World Summit for Children; (b) sustaining advances that were made; (c) reducing inequalities; and (d) addressing emerging challenges, inter alia (i) absence of indicators to assess the fulfillment of child rights; (ii) lack of access to quality health services and health information; (iii) the exploitation of children in all forms; and (iv) the need to integrate children in decision making processes.

8. Children and adolescents face barriers to their full participation, protection, development and survival, and the full enjoyment of their rights. These barriers contravene the principle of non-discrimination, which calls for ensuring rights irrespective of the child's or his or her parent's or legal guardian's race, color, sec, age, language, culture, religion, political or other opinion, national, ethnic or social origin, property, disability, birth or other status. Further, that the progress that has been made can be stalled or reversed by armed conflicts, natural and other disasters, new and resurgent diseases, unequal income and power distribution and other threats.

9. In spite of significant progress in implementing social policies and programmes in favor of children and adolescents, there are still weaknesses in areas related to support for families, community organizations, the administration of juvenile justice, health and family life education, cultural expressions, and recreation, among others. Further that weaknesses in these policies, if not corrected, increase the risk for millions of children and adolescents to suffer exclusion, violence, impoverishment and despair.

ARE DETERMINDED TO:

1. Make every necessary effort so that children and adolescents have opportunities to fully develop their physical, mental, spiritual, moral, and social capacities and to guarantee and promote respect for human rights.

2. Develop and implement integrated policies and actions aimed at breaking the inter-generational cycles of poverty, and eradicating exclusion, discrimination and lack of respect for human rights.

3. Promote actions and mechanisms to maximize the participation of children and adolescents in decision-making in all matters that directly and indirectly affect them.

4. Support the creation of mechanisms that facilitate the participation of civil society in all matters that affect children and adolescents.

5. Reaffirm Paragraph 10 of the Vienna Declaration and Programme of Action which identifies the importance of the Right to development, affirms the human person as the central subject of development and emphasizes the connection to the maximum survival and development of the child.

6. Promote actions to eliminate discrimination and exclusion of ethnic groups, religious groups, linguistic or other minorities or indigenous peoples, and to strengthen their diverse cultural identities.

7. Ensure the protection of children and adolescents from all forms of abuse, including injury, violence, neglect, sexual abuse, commercial exploitation, sale and traffic, forced labor, and from forced or compulsory recruitment for armed conflicts. Further, to ensure such protection through combined strategies of support, including institutional and legal reform, information dissemination, rights awareness promotion, formation of community support groups and family life education, with special emphasis on the role of the father.

8. Ensure the protection of children and adolescents from all forms of discrimination and harm, and support policies, plans and programmes to advance equality and respect for them.

9. Ensure that every child and adolescent in conflict with the law has due process and is treated in accordance with the relevant principles and provisions of the Convention on the Rights of the Child and other international and national legal instruments and standards for child protection. Further, to take such steps as are needed to provide training in human rights and in the administration of justice for children and adolescents, to all those involved with children and adolescents in conflict with the law.

10. Ensure the rights of children and adolescents with different abilities, including those with disabilities, to appropriate services, attention, and education adequate to their capacities. Similarly, to create mechanisms to support their families and/or caregivers and their full integration into the society.

11. Encourage the partnership between Governments and civil society to assist children and adolescents to develop values that

promote human rights and equality, peace, tolerance, justice, solidarity and positive gender relations.

12. Continue progress towards universal access to comprehensive health services, including effective prevention, early intervention, and treatment and rehabilitation strategies. Also, increase knowledge of adolescents and children about sexual and reproductive health, with special emphasis on HIV/AIDS and other sexually transmitted infections.

13. Progress toward universal high quality early childhood and primary education in an environment that promotes the full development of children and adolescents, instills respect for human rights, and prepares them for responsible life in society.

14. Increase resources, based on availability, for comprehensive early childhood care and development to ensure better learning outcomes, reduce inequalities, and ensure fulfillment of human rights. Cooperate with civil society and families to support proper health, nutrition, and education.

15. Develop and implement programmes geared to creating opportunities for children, adolescents, and adults who have not benefit from formal education or have dropped out of school. Special attention should be given to disadvantaged children and adolescents, such as those with disabilities, those living with and affected by HIV/AIDS, adolescent mothers, and those in conflict with the law.

16. Urge all countries to consider signing, ratifying and implementing all international legal instruments relating to the rights of children, in particular, (i) the Optional Protocol on the Involvement of Children in Armed Conflict; and (ii) the Optional Protocol on the Sale of Children, Child Pornography and Child Prostitution and Immediate Action for the Elimination of the Worst Forms of Child Labor, ILO Convention 138 concerning Minimum Age for Admission to Employment and the Hague Convention on Protection of Children and Cooperation in

Respect of Inter-Country Adoption. These legal instruments represent major advances in the international effort to strengthen and enforce legal norms and national plans of action for the protection of the most vulnerable children.

17. Call on donor and creditor countries and international financial institutions to consider accelerating the adoption of concrete ways to relieve the public debt burden. This should permit the adoption of actions to benefit children and adolescents.

18. Reaffirm the implementation of the 20/20 initiative, addressed at Copenhagen +5 in July 2000, based on mutual agreement and commitment between the donor and recipient countries to ensure universal access to social services.

19. Increase horizontal technical cooperation between countries in order to share positive experiences and strategies, which can help to accelerate the processes necessary for achieving the agreed goals.

20. Institute and consolidate harmonized national and regional information systems, which provide disaggregated data on the situation of children and adolescents in order to enhance decision-making, define and evaluate policies, and inform the populace.

21. Encourage Governments to work towards the full implementation of the commitments made at the World Conference on Human Rights 1993, the International Conference on population and Development 1994, and ICPD +5, the World Summit on Social Development 1995 and WSSD+5, The Fourth World Conference on Women 1995 and Beijing+5, World Conference on Education 1990 and World Education Forum 2000.

22. Recognize that equitable sustainable human development could be facilitated if the rights and well being of children are promoted and protected. The individual development of

children is intrinsically connected to the development of the human society, thus shaping the future of the world.

23. Respond to the unexpected challenges, which will arise, that this Consensus does not address. In all such cases, decisions will be based on the principles of non-discrimination, best interests of the child, maximum survival and development, and participation of children and adolescents.

FINAL CONSIDERATIONS:

1. Request that the Host of the Fifth Ministerial Meeting on Children and Social Policy submit the Kingston Consensus as a regional contribution to the Preparatory Committee for the UN Special Session on Children through its Secretariat, and to the Preparatory Committee of the Third Summit of the Americas in 2001.

2. Express gratitude to the Countries of the Caribbean, and in particular to the Government of Jamaica, for hosting this meeting, and especially to the Right Honorable P.J. Patterson, Prime Minister of Jamaica.

3. Express their thanks to the Government of Peru as the Pro-Tempore Secretariat for its invaluable contributions to the preparatory process for the Fifth Ministerial Meeting.

4. Express their gratitude to UNICEF, all other UN Agencies, organizations of the Inter-American System and international cooperation agencies, and other members of the Interagency Coordinating Committee, for their facilitation of the Fifth Ministerial Meeting.